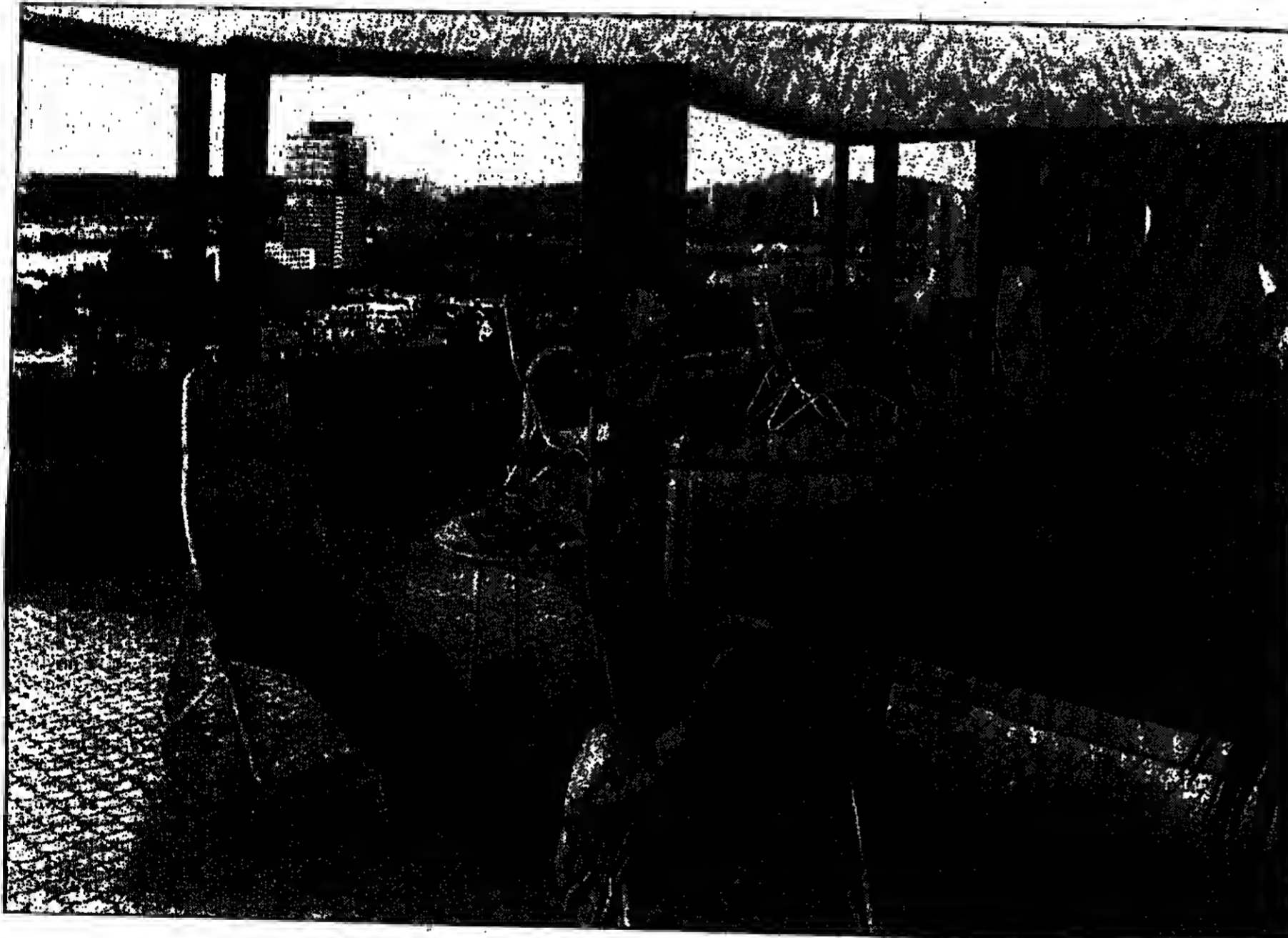


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# The German Tribune

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## Views differ on West's tactics for Belgrade Conference

About two dozen people — MPs, ambassadors, senior civil servants, journalists and scientists — met recently round the octagonal table at the Aspen Institute in Schwabenwerder, West Berlin. This select group of Europeans and Americans were gathered together to clarify objectives and opportunities, tactics and strategy to be adopted at the Belgrade follow-up conference to review progress on the Helsinki agreement.

This second meeting of the 35 nations which signed the Final Act at Helsinki two years ago will begin on 15 June in Belgrade, starting with a preliminary gathering at sub-ambassador level to decide on topics and the agenda.

The ambassadors will presumably meet same time in October, after the summer recess.

The Belgrade conference will be a far cry from its predecessor. It will, after all, serve an entirely different purpose. At Helsinki and Geneva negotiations were aimed at agreement between countries with different social systems on certain principles and standards of behaviour.

The Helsinki accords were, it was agreed, to be based on a general consensus, meaning that each and every one of the 35 participants could in theory impose a veto. At all events it was nearly two years before agreement was reached.

Unlike Helsinki the Belgrade conference has only one objective, to check the extent to which the two sides have stood by their Helsinki commitments.

Everyone will come briefed with a ca-

going so far that the other side decides it has had enough. Were that to happen, no one would benefit."

All the US participants and a number of the British subscribed to an altogether different viewpoint. Evidently encouraged by Mr Carter's new morality, about which they enthused, they were all for letting rip at the Belgrade conference table. There was a lengthy discussion on human rights, all concerned agreeing that their maximum implementation in East and West is highly desirable and of the greatest importance. Views differed solely as to how this objective might best be achieved.

Advocates of President Carter's policy on human rights felt that Washington had for too long appeared indifferent. For fear of upsetting the Soviet Union the United States had stomachached repeated violations of human rights.

Now, they argued, is the time to make human rights the linchpin of foreign policy. This, indeed, is exactly what the American people expect.

If you did not share this opinion you were left with the impression that the Carter administration's new morality is mainly intended to unite US opinion.

"Unlike secret diplomacy," the legal adviser to a US senator noted, "open diplomacy generates backing from public opinion."

Yet if human rights are to be given priority, surely what matters is the degree of success from the viewpoint of the individual.

Viewed in this light the Carter administration's human rights policy has so far had mainly negative repercussions, with members of the general public being arrested, harassed and having their homes searched.

In the post-Helsinki detente years 1975 and 1976, on the other hand, 11,000 people were allowed to leave the GDR to join members of their family in

the Federal Republic, not to mention 36,400 people from Poland and 15,700 people from the Soviet Union. These are facts which are already being forgotten in many cases. One point forcefully made at the octagonal table was the evident case with which political ambition can be given pseudo-satisfaction. A verbal tour de force without practical consequences can be more impressive than access quietly achieved and not given red-letter treatment. There was lengthy, hair-splitting argument, for instance, about the definition of non-intervention. Can radio transmissions using directional aerials be deemed intervention? Does the use of jamming equipment to impede reception of these transmissions constitute intervention? Is arms sale from one country to another intervention? Or, for that matter, arms deliveries of what ever kind?

Or, to take another example, is there a link between various sectors of negotiation, between Salt and human rights, for instance?

President Carter says there is no linkage and US participants at the Aspen seminar agreed with him to a man. The various talks are entirely independent of each other.

Yet if this really were the case or, indeed, the Russians thought it were, the Soviet Union could simply opt out of the Belgrade conference and insist that

there must be no repercussions on the Salt talks.

If the claim that there is no linkage were objectively accurate there would be no point in a number of concepts such as the *quid pro quo* which have done such sterling service over the centuries — nor yet in the platitudes that in one way or another everything is connected with everything else.

Social and Christian Democratic members of the Bonn Bundestag who attended the Berlin seminar were quick to intersperse each other's remarks with sub-acid caustics. This ill will was no doubt attributable to the full-scale Bundestag debate on human rights that had been held not long beforehand.

The Christian Democrats had called on the government to submit to the Belgrade conference an exhaustive documentation covering every conceivable aspect of human rights and constituting a monumental indictment.

The Federal government, Christian Democratic speakers told the Bundestag, is duty bound "to intervene with all its might in each and every case."

The Social Democrats recalled that two years previously the Christian Democrats had called on the government not to sign the Final Act of the Helsinki accords. Basket Three, the Opposition had claimed, was mere window-dressing.

The Bonn coalition of Social and Free Democrats countered that the Christian Democrats' latest proposal was no doubt also based on an erroneous assessment of the situation.

"If you want to reduce infingement's



Bonn visit

Senegal's President Léopold Sédar Senghor being welcomed by President Walter Scheel in Bonn on 2 May. President Senghor who was on a five-day State visit to this country also had political talks with Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher (Photos: dpa)

### IN THIS ISSUE

**POLITICS** Page 3  
Struggle for Schmidt and Kohl to control their parties

**LAW** Page 5  
Beader-Mainhof terrorism trial makes legal history

**HANOVER FAIR** Page 6  
Investment climate shows a noticeable improvement

atalogue of recommendations and omissions, and were it not for the summer recess the marathon debates would probably continue for months.

In the West agreement has yet to be reached on many points. No decision has so far been taken on whether countries will say their pieces individually or whether some at least will submit a joint summary of their views and assessments.

"Just the sort of occasion for a holier-than-thou approach," a British participant at the Berlin seminar commented. He no doubt had the Biblical metaphor of the splinter in someone else's eye in mind. A Federal Republic veteran of the Geneva CSCE talks agreed. "It is all a high-wire act," he said. "You have to try to exploit every opportunity without



(Cartoon: Horst Halzinger/Nebelpalmer)

Continued on page 2













